



**Betsy Gara
Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Planning & Development Committee
March 9, 2022**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) ***supports* HB-5359 - N ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF THE FEASIBILITY OF PERMITTING THE ONLINE ADVERTISEMENT OF LEGAL NOTICES BY MUNICIPALITIES.**

COST ***supports* HB-5359** which requires the Office of Policy and Management to determine the feasibility of allowing municipalities to post legal notices online.

Although COST believes that the time has come to allow municipalities to post legal notices online rather than publish such notices in newspapers, we appreciate that there are some issues that would be helpful to address to facilitate online publication.

A single legal notice can cost a municipality a few hundred dollars to publish in a newspaper. According to the Office of Legislative Research (2016-R-0099), there are at least 149 separate statutes requiring municipalities to publish legal notices in newspapers. Small towns are budgeting \$5,000 to \$45,000 a year to publish required legal notices, funds which can be put to better use to meet other obligations.

Recognizing the savings and greater public accessibility associated with posting notices online, Connecticut has adopted legislation allowing various state agencies to post certain legal notices on their website rather than in newspapers. For example, Public Act 13-205 allows the state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, under certain circumstances, to publicly notice permit application information on its website rather than in a newspaper.

In addition, in December of 2019, the Connecticut court system announced that it was moving required public legal notices from newspapers to its website, citing lower costs and the potential to reach a wider audience. And, under Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7I, Section 19(c), the requirement that municipalities publish legal notices in a newspaper was suspended and, instead, municipalities were directed to post such notices on their website.

Shifting publication of legal notices from print newspapers to websites did not result in any issues or concerns in our communities because people have become accustomed to visiting their municipal website to obtain timely information.

COST looks forward to working with OPOM to facilitate the timely online publication of municipal legal notices.